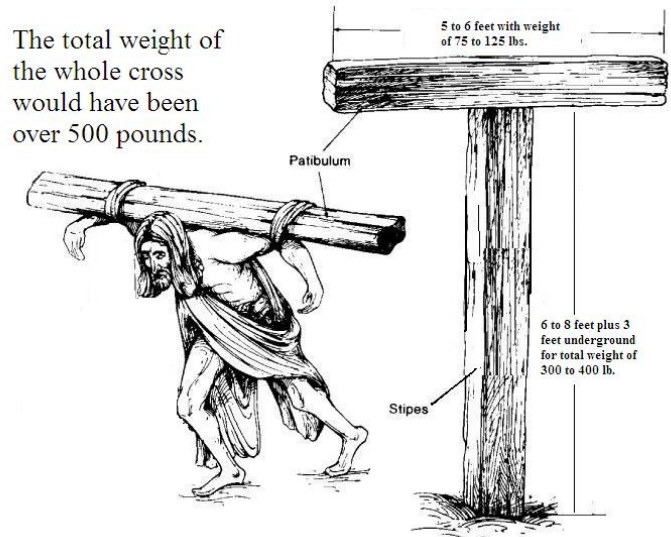


The Journey to Golgotha (Mt 27:31-34; Mk 15:20-23; Lk 23:26-33; Jn 19:16-17)

Mark 15:20-23 And after they had mocked Him, they took the purple off Him, and put His garments on Him. And they led Him out to crucify Him. 21 And they pressed into service a passer-by coming from the country, Simon of Cyrene (the father of Alexander and Rufus), to bear His cross. 22 And they brought Him to the place Golgotha, which is translated, place of a Skull. 23 And they tried to give Him wine mixed with myrrh; but He did not take it.

- After Jesus was mercilessly beaten in the death scourge, they peeled the scarlet robe from off His back, His own clothing back on and prepared Him for the final journey to the crucifixion site. He was handed over to the executioner squad, consisting of one centurion and four legionnaires (John 19:23). This appears to be the only kind thing they did for Jesus this day, for usually the victims were marched naked through the streets to add to their humiliation. It would be their job to usher Jesus to the site of His crucifixion.
- Naturally Jesus would have very little strength left to make this exhausting trek outside of the city and up to the hill called Golgotha, the place of the skull. It was said that the rock formation of the hill looked similar to a skull. This was ironically the place that was often decorated with the crucified bodies of rebellious Jews and criminals.
- Like most people to have been crucified, Jesus would be carrying the horizontal crossbeam of the cross called the *patibulum*. It ranged in weight, but the average would have been about 100 pounds. It may not sound like a lot of weight, but when combined with the beating that Jesus received, it would have felt like a ton of bricks. The vertical part of the cross was called the *stipes* and would have already been at the top of the hill waiting for the other part to arrive and be attached together. The total weight of both would have been about 500 pounds, far too much for the average Galilean to carry, much less a severely beaten One.
- The centurion in charge of the crucifixion would march directly ahead of the victim and an assistant marches to the right of him. This assistant carried the placard (titulus) which read the charge in which the victim was being crucified. Jesus' placard did not have an official charge, but a statement, "King of the Jews". In front and behind them were the soldiers, two in front and two in back. They were there to make sure there would not be any escape attempts.
- As Jesus pressed on, lacking the strength to carry the cross any significant distance, it was necessary to enlist someone to help Him finish the required job of



carrying the cross. Enter the scene a passerby named Simon. He was a Jewish man that was perhaps in town for the Passover, having traveled from the region of North Africa. He was just minding his own business when the soldiers pressed him against his will into the task of assisting Jesus in carrying the cross. Imagine being called to the side of a bloodied and beaten man that you have never met and being forced against your will to do it. This was not a good day for Simon of Cyrene.

- Mark records that Simon had two sons, Alexander and Rufus, indicating that they probably became Christians at a later date. There is a famous Rufus in the church mentioned in Romans 16:13, but we do not know for sure if it was him. What we do know is that Mark assumes that the readers are familiar to them.

Luke 23:27-31 And there were following Him a great multitude of the people, and of women who were mourning and lamenting Him. 28 But Jesus turning to them said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, stop weeping for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. 29 "For behold, the days are coming when they will say, 'Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bore, and the breasts that never nursed.' 30 "Then they will begin to say to the mountains, 'Fall on us,' and to the hills, 'Cover us.' 31 "For if they do these things in the green tree, what will happen in the dry?" 32 And two others also, who were criminals, were being led away to be put to death with Him.

- Luke mentions some information that adds to the account. Lastly mentioned in the text was the fact that there were two other men that were marching toward Golgotha that day. They were two thieves, one in the front of Jesus death entourage and one behind. They also would have had the same set-up, a centurion and four legionnaires. Since the Romans typically crucified in a first-come / first-serve basis, they were usually lined up in the order of arrival. Since Jesus had a thief on the right and left of Him, the order of line is probably confirmed.
- Back at the front of the passage, Luke exposes us to some of the words of judgment against Jerusalem and its impending doom and destruction. There were some women along the path that were obviously distraught over the situation. They were mourning and lamenting for Him, possibly even being some of the women that followed Him in the past.
- Jesus, the One that showed great compassion, healing, mercy and hope to so many, was being treated in the worst possible way. They can understand this and it seems that it could not get any worse than that. Jesus informs them that terrible days are coming and there will be something far more devastating than what they witnessed there.
- It will be so bad that ones that people will consider blessed will be the women who are barren. How can that be, for one of the greatest reproaches on a woman in first-century Israel was to be barren. When Jerusalem was destroyed in 70 AD, things were worse more than any time in their past. Mothers that were burdened with children in trying to flee from the army of Rome and the conditions of the famine did not fair well/ Children were jerked from their parent's arms and sold into slavery and some even had to resort to the cannibalizing of the own while the city was under siege. If they could treat a righteous man like Jesus in such and

unrighteous way, then what will occur when the unrighteous are among them? It will be utter chaos.

Matt 27:33-34 And when they had come to a place called Golgotha, which means Place of a Skull, 34 they gave Him wine to drink mingled with gall; and after tasting {it,} He was unwilling to drink.

- They finally arrived at the place of crucifixion. Jesus is offered some wine drink mingled with gall. It appears that this was something offered by some of the observers to take the edge off the pain. *Prov 31:6-7 Give strong drink to him who is perishing, and wine to him whose life is bitter. 7 Let him drink and forget his poverty, and remember his trouble no more.*
- Jesus does not take the analgesic, for He will be fully aware of His circumstance. He will go to that cross, the sober Savior of the world, not concerned for Himself, but of those in the world that need a way out.
- It was a tough road to Calvary, but He made it! The heat of the day that beat on His back, the rubbing of the crossbeam on His open wounds, the weak knees, the thirst, the hunger, the pain and agony had been overcome. Now just one more step...the actual cross.

Closing Lesson:

Jesus spoke some words in the gospel of Matthew that should be more clearly understood through this lesson.

- Matt 10:38 "And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me.
- Matt 16:24 Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.

The road ahead is not easy.

If you became a Christian because you expected an easy life of no conflict or adversities in this life, then you signed up under the wrong covenant. There will be many ups and downs, many joys and sorrows, many comforts and pains. Jesus identified the life of following Him to carrying a cross. If you think Jesus had a cake walk, then you read it wrong.

We must be compelled to help another.

Simon was compelled against his will to help Jesus carry the cross. We as Christians are also going to have to help others in the church family to carry their crosses and vice-versa. We are not designed to go it alone, but to help. You are your brother's keeper and sometimes he will need a helping hand to get the Calvary.

We must not give up.

Jesus could have very easily given up and died on the street, but He pressed on. He could have thrown a fit of protest against the system, but He did not. He would not and could not do so because if He did not make it to the cross, we could not be forgiven and saved.

We also must not give up. Our children and friends and co-workers are watching and waiting to see if we are serious and walk with our talk. They want to see how we react when reaching a bump in the road or a rough stretch of hill. They are watching to see if we get up when we are knocked down, stronger than we were before. Their future might be tied to your daily cross carrying.